**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact:**

**May 20, 2020**

**Mobile Hot Spots for Loan at Montana Public Libraries**

**(Helena)** – At the May meeting of the Montana State Library Commission, funds were allocated to purchase hot spots and cellular service to increase the availability of mobile hot spots that can be loaned to library patrons throughout Montana. 59 libraries agreed to participate in the pilot. Each library received at least three fully funded mobile hot spots with a cellular plan. This pilot project has been set up to explore how these devices are used by Montanans to access critical services and support economic development activities.

During the COVID-19 crisis response, the need for making Internet access mobile in communities has become even more pressing. As library buildings were shuttered across the Treasure State in March and April, those that depend on WiFi at their public library were left without access for their suddenly growing critical needs: distance learning for children, applying for unemployment benefits, seeking telemedicine options, and ordering necessities for home delivery, to name a few.

Montana State Librarian, Jennie Stapp said, “By providing mobile hot spots to libraries, and through the pilot study, we hope to expand access now, and learn more about the impacts of offering cellular-data devices to Montana’s library patrons so that we can best support Montanans to thrive.”

Library patrons across Montana are encouraged to inquire at their local public or tribal college library for details on the Montana State Library Hot Spot Lending Program.

The Montana State Library helps all organizations, communities, and Montanans thrive through excellent library resources and services. For more information about the Montana State Library, visit <http://msl.mt.gov>. For more information about the State Library Commission, contact Jennie Stapp, State Librarian, at (406) 444-3116 or via e-mail at: jstapp2@mt.gov.

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